DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 890 EA 020 545

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TITLE What the Eight Year Study and the Humanities Curriculum Project Do and Do Not Have in Common.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 5-9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; *Educational Change; Educational Development; Educational Improvement; Humanities; *Humanities Instruction; Secondary Education; Social Development
IDENTIFIERS *Eight Year Study; *Humanities Curriculum Project

ABSTRACT

The Eight Year Study (EYS) and the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) are compared and contrasted on the basis of five hypotheses. First, EYS and HCP were similar in confounding conventional notions of success and failure. Second, both were manifestations of progressive education. Third, both arose in climates of unease over perceived breakdowns in social and educational consensus, but their strategies for coping with unease differed. Fourth, EYS and HCP used different strategies for promoting curriculum change. Fifth, EYS and HCP were similar in promoting new forms of curriculum evaluation but dissimilar in the specific forms they promoted. Appended are seven references. (SI)

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What the Eight Year Study and the Humanities Curriculum Project Do and Do Not Have in Common

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WHAT THE EIGHT YEAR STUDY AND THE HUMANITIES CURRICULUM PROJECT DO AND DO NOT HAVE IN COMMON

Assessing what the Eight Year Study (EYS) and the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) do and do not have in common is relatively easy if we consider them as discrete entities, each having its own structural characteristics and each existing in its own particular place and time, and relatively difficult if we consider them in less tangible terms of what they meant to the people involved with them and the legacies each has left behind. Fortunately, the title of this symposium suggests the latter consideration should not be neglected. I say "fortunately" both because my own task thus becomes more difficult but also more interesting and because I will be followed by some people who have been directly involved in EYS and HCP and are therefore in a strong position to correct my misconceptions. Of course, I will not deliberately put forward misconceptions for us to work through in the remainder of our hour and one half; instead, I will call them "hypotheses." (If you sense that I want to have things two ways, you are right.) Like most American curriculum historians I am reasonably familiar with EYS but far less familiar with HCP, which I have only recently come to investigate. Nonetheless, I hope that today's investigations, which I open, will help introduce HCP to a broader audience of American curriculum historians, stimulate further critical assessment of the parallels between EYS and HCP and the social and educational contexts in which they existed, and explore the influence of EYS and HCP on subsequent beliefs and practices in curriculum.

What can be said reasonably safely about EYS and HCP is that both were well known in their own countries as major curriculum reform projects which existed for a relatively short time but have continued to have significant influence attributed to them long after their formal ends. EYS existed in the United States for approximately one decade beginning in the early 1930s. Sponsored by the Progressive Education Association (PEA), it was ostensibly a limited experiment with progressive methods of curriculum development. Although the experiment focused on only 30 selected secondary schools which developed their own curricula when freed from the ordinary constraints imposed by college admissions, it

turned into a self-conscious attempt to change the kinds of curricula and the processes of curriculum development which prevailed throughout American education at the time. Though successful in demonstrating the viability of curricula developed by individual schools in accordance with the needs of their own students, it probably did not widely change the traditional, more conservative curriculum practices which prevailed, but it did broaden the basis for college admissions and for educational evaluation in the United States. HCP existed in the United Kingdom for approximately half a decade beginning in the late 1960s. Sponsored by both the central government and a private foundation, it was ostensibly a curriculum development and dissemination program narrowly focused on social issues at the level of secondary schools. Although limited to 36 schools in its trial phase, its potential for wide-scale dissemination and its use of some progressive practices made it generally threatening to many of the traditional curriculum practices which prevailed in British education. Though unsuccessful in becoming as widely adopted throughout the United Kingdom as its origins as a dissemination project suggested it might, it is probably still in use in one form or another by a small but devoted cadre of teachers. It, too, has helped broaden educational evaluation.

What cannot be said with much safety I frame as a series of hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS 1: EYS and HCP were similar in confounding conventional notions of success and failure.

In conventional terms both projects were failures, at least to the extent that both failed to realize their aspirations of being widely adopted by the schools in their own countries. For all practical purposes, EYS was terminated by World War II, and some official support ended for HCP even before it had completed its trial phase. Given the early promise of both projects and the high expectations of their supporters, their eventual failures became all the more spectacular. In the case of EYS, evaluations seemed to demonstrate that students from the 30 experimental schools did as well in college academically as students from conventional secondary schools and were better off in terms of their personal and social development. These results were taken as indicating the superiority of the progressive curricula of the experimental schools. In

1942, when the first volume of the report of EYS was published (Aiken, 1942), the Progressive Education Association seemed quite confident that progressive curricula represented the great wave of the future which would sweep over American education, yet by 1957 progressive education itself was under wide-spread attack in the United States, the PEA had disbanded, and Sputnik was literally on the horizon ushering in a new and conservative era of curriculum reform financially supported by the federal government. In the case of HCP, the project became controversial early on, particularly its materials on racial relations. Its substance, the open inquiry it encouraged of its students, and the non-directive techniques used by its teachers attracted vehement criticisms from all quarters, such as "bourgeois indoctrination," "dangerous revolution," "ethical relativism," and "substituting social action with a parlour game" (MacDonald and Walker, 1976). Though adopted largely at their own peril by teachers in some schools, HCP never became a major force in changing the curricula of British schools.

Still, for both EYS and HCP their melodies have lingered on long after their songs have ended. To sustain the metaphor, both seem to have struck deeply responsive chords in some educators. Both are still referred to, I believe, not just fondly, but even passionately by educators familiar with them who are seeking historical precedence for and otherwise justifying curricular and instructional practices to which they are deeply committed and which are easily misunderstood or ridiculed by indifferent citizens or hostile critics. Thus, the unconventional success that has arisen out of the conventional failures of both projects is largely in their symbolic and emotional value to educators who wish to carry out work of the same type or to rally others to the same cause, especially in the face of adverse circumstances. Their value to curriculum historians, therefore, also extends considerably beyond analyses of their contents, accounts of their chronologies, and documentations of their tangible influences.

HYPOTHESIS 2: EYS and HCP were similar in that both were manifestations of progressive education.

About EYS, of course, there is no doubt. Its sponsorship by the PEA indicates its origins, and it reflected such general progressive watchwords as freedom, democracy, and experimentation. More

specifically, it liberated its schools, teachers, and students from the ordinary constraints of college admissions and engaged them in major curriculum reorganization. EYS emphasized that individual curricula should be developed around student interests and the generic problems of youth in relation to the changing society; that teachers should play a major role in curriculum decision making; that contacts between school and the home should be established; that curricula should develop reflective thinking and individual problem solving but also emphasize social understanding, such as how all people are fundamentally alike; and that curricula should therefore lead to multiple outcomes, such as understandings, appreciations, and functional uses. The curricula developed by most experimental schools were organized as core curricula or by broad fields, rather than by academic area.

The relationship between HCP and progressive education is considerably less clear. The basic report of HCP (Rudduck, 1983) does not describe its intellectual origins. Nonetheless, it seems to have been heavily influenced by the ideas of Lawrence Stenhouse, who was the leader of the team which brought HCP into existence, and my own reading of Stenhouse (Stenhouse, 1983, for instance) places him among the forefront of progressive thinkers. The specific curricular changes which HCP brought to its trial schoools were considerably more limited than were those of EYS, but were progressive in intent and effect. HCP did not attempt to change the entire curriculum of any school, but it did dramatically reorganize a portion of the overall curriculum around a broad topical approach to social understandings and both protected and encouraged the diversity of points of view held by individual students. Students were encouraged to become active and intelligent inquirers. These practices were far more reflective of the progressive tenets of freedom, democracy, and experimentation than were the prevailing, more conservative practices which they supplanted in specific schools.

HYPOTHESIS 3: EYS and HCP were similar in arising in climates of unease over perceived breakdowns in social and educational consensus but were dissimilar in their strategies for coping with unease.

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Unease was everywhere in the United States during the Great Depression as a large proportion of the population suffered economic hardships and became increasingly ready for major changes in all phases

of American life, including education. Within the embryonic curriculum community, the 1927 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Rugg, 1927) had apparently struck a compromise between curriculum conservatives and liberals, giving both groups a voice in determining the curricula which would be used in the nation's schools. However, the beginning of EYS actually proved how illusory that compromise had been, for the PEA advocated only liberal principles for reconstructing curricula, and the willingness of many colleges and universities to suspend their ordinary admission requirements for students from EYS experimental schools demonstrated a new acceptance of such principles. When in the late 1930s the curriculum community began seriously to organize itself into what appeared on the surface to be a united profession, most of those who did the organizing held principles very similar to those of the PEA. Thus, EYS coped with unease by representing itself as built upon a far broader consensus about curriculum principles than actually existed at the time, for the views of conservatives certainly were excluded from EYS itself and conservatives were probably underrepresented at this time within the newly forming organization of the profession. The inability of the PEA to build a more far-reaching consensus probably accounts in part for the pronounced tone of exhortation that permeates Aiken's report of EYS and the fervor with which the report advances the belief that EYS had demonstrated that schools throughout the nation should adopt its curriculum principles.

In the United Kingdom in the 1960s there was unease over breakdowns in consensus about society and education. There were growing efforts to expand the role of schooling in British life, particularly to extend the amount of schooling made available to all youth and to use schooling to equip its recipients to better participate actively and critically in what might become a more open and democratic society. Changes in education thus represented some threat to the prevailing, long-term social structures. HCP itself began in the face of the impending raising of the national school leaving age to sixteen years. For the first time all students were to receive a full secondary education or at least would be kept in school for an equivalent amount of time. HCP can be considered as one effort among many undertaken during the 1960s in the United Kingdom to cope with the problems that seemingly would be created by this extension of schooling. The decade itself can be considered as one of planned educational change. Since HCP was supported in part by the

central government and was part of a coordinated national effort, it could be honestly represented to the British public and educators as an "establishment" program. In reality, I believe, HCP was potentially quite subversive of both what actually existed in British schools and what British society was likely collectively to accept. Its sponsors were probably very much aware that it represented a gamble in attempting to foster too much change too soon. Thus, its establishment credentials coped with the general unease of the time by masking the real threat that HCP represented to establishment practices.

HYPOTHESIS 4: EYS and HCP were dissimilar in their strategies for promoting curriculum change.

At first glance this hypothesis seems invalid, but it probably is so only if the two projects are seen in the most general way, as introducing new practices into experimental schools, thus becoming potential models for emulation elsewhere. While there is some truth in this generalization, there are important differences in how it applies to the two projects. Perhaps most significantly, EYS became a model only in the vaguest sense, for each of the 30 experimental schools adopted its own procedures and developed its own highly individualized curricula. These schools had no particular pattern of curriculum organization in common, only the 30 different curricula which they created through progressive principles of curriculum development when freed from the constraints of college admissions requirements. Thus, EYS really represented 30 different models which worked in different ways and with different degrees of success and failure in 30 different places, not a single, universally successful model which generalizations about EYS seem to imply. Furthermore, EYS was not originally intended as a demonstration project, though there is no doubt that early on many of its supporters expected the experiment in progressive curricula to be successful and its results to spread. Its supporters had no specific strategy for promoting curriculum change, only the somewhat naive belief that what was good about EYS would surely be picked up in a kind of grass roots movement that would eventually spread throughout American schools. Goodness would create consensus. Its strategy for promoting curriculum change was really only a faith in the kind of universal or populist elitism which typifies many American reform movements.

In contrast, HCP was originally meant to be a demonstration project. It developed the same curriculum (including the same topics, materials, and teaching techniques) for use in all its trial schools. That curriculum was meant to be a unified model, and it focused narrowly enough on a specific subject area (social relations) so trial schools had merely to act as hosts for an experiment in one subject only. Any school that used HCP would have to change neither its overall principles nor the specific curricula or teaching techniques it was using in other subject matter areas. Not surprisingly, HCP teachers in trial schools were looked upon by other teachers in various ways ranging from admiration and interest to suspicion and hostility. Sponsorship of HCP by the central government and a private foundation indicated it was anything but a grass roots movement for from-the-bottom-up curriculum development. Instead, it was a clear case of from-the-top-down development of a single, highly specific curriculum which, if it proved successful, could be widely disseminated, although the experience of HCP teachers warned early on that resistence was likely, that a consensus for it would be difficult to create in many of the places to which it would presumably go. HCP actually represented an effort by a relatively small group of curriculum leaders to foster a more socially conscious British society by creating a curriculum which could be disseminated to the less enlightened through the authority of the central government. In so doing, it embodied a strategy of change determined by a relatively small intellectual and political elite. Whereas this strategy is probably more typical of British than American reform movements, many of the specific efforts of the last several decades in the United States to improve curricula through federal financial aid or state legislation have also embodied a similar strategy.

HYPOTHESIS 5: EYS and HCP were similar in promoting new forms of curriculum evaluation but dissimilar in the specific forms they promoted.

Perhaps the most impressive and long-lasting accomplishment of EYS was its influence on how students are evaluated in schools, an influence that has definitely spread beyond the United States. Before EYS, student progress was judged primarily by the testing of academic achievement. Tests usually measured simple skills or the recall of information and were reported as a single score (Tyler, 1986/1987). EYS emphasized multiple outcomes of schooling, however, and developed an impressive new array of techniques for sampling such things as students' broad understandings,

their creative work, their attitudes, and their abilities to cope with new situations (Smith and Tyler, 1942). EYS demonstrated that students could be appraised in terms of their progress toward a much wider variety of goals than had previously seemed feasible and thereby encouraged curriculum evaluators to consider the multiple effects of a program in formulating their judgments of its success or failure. Success or failure was seen in terms of the fit between the goals of a program and its many measurable effects.

When HCP began more than a quarter of a century later, the idea that curriculum evaluators should seek out multiple effects was well established. The HCP evaluation team measured different kinds of student progress; however, they also expanded their conception of what to look for considerably beyond measurable student progress and their notions of how to report what they had seen considerably beyond assessing success or failure. Many of their evaluation reports took the form of case studies which attempted to portray the complexity of what was going on in the lived situations within HCP schools and the local educational districts which had adopted the HCP curriculum. Case studies of this kind do not focus on fit between goals and effects, nor do they confine investigations to what is tangible. They portray complex situations in ways that do not provide closure, but which aim instead at fostering new understandings and open inquiry which, in turn, may lead to a broader and sounder basis for subsequently making value judgments than do conventional efforts to assess success or failure. The uses of such case studies are distinctly educational, both for participants within a situation and for its observers. The evaluation of HCP included pioneering practical and theoretical work and stimulated subsequent advances in the use of the case study as a means of curriculum evaluation.

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